

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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R 071315Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8552

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 6138

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, CH

SUBJ: SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS: COOL AND GETTING COOLER

SUMMARY: THE CONTINUING PRC CONDEMNATION OF INDIAN POLICY IN SIKKIM AND WELL AS OTHER RECENT ACTIONS HAVE CONFIRMED A BELIEF AMONG OFFICIALS HERE THAT THE PRC REMAINS ILL DISPOSED TOWARDS INDIA AND AIMS AT DISCREDITING GOI POLICIES AMONG ITS NEIGHBORS IN SOUTH ASIA. RECENT COURSE OF SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS RAISES NUMBER OF QUESTIONS TO WHICH EMBASSY DELHI AT THIS TIME HAS NO ANSWERS.
END SUMMARY.

1. INDIAN OFFICIALS HAVE CONCLUDED ON THE BASIS OF THE PRC'S CONTINUING CONDEMNATION OF THE SIKKIM DEVELOPMENTS AS WELL AS OTHER RECENT ACTIONS THAT THE PRC HAS NO INTEREST AT THIS TIME IN IMPROVING SINO-INDIAN RELATIOS
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AND IS ACTUALLY INTENSIFYING ITS TROUBLE-MAKING AGAINST

INDIA IN SOUTH ASIA. THIS FEELING HAS CRYSTALLIZED AMONG OFFICIALS HERE SINCE THE PRC'S OFFICIAL CONDEMNATION OF INDIAN POLICY IN SIKKIM WAS PUBLISHED APRIL 29. IT WAS GIVEN DELHI'S OFFICIAL STAMP OF APPROVAL WITH THE MAY 1 PUBLICATION OF THE GOI REJOINDER ON SIKKIM WHICH INCLUDED THE STATEMENT THAT "CHINESE POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA IS TO DISTURB THE STABILITY AND PEACE OF THE REGION AND TO ENCOURAGE DISAGREEMENT AND SUSPICION AMONG THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION TO SERVE THIS PURPOSE."

2. THE HEAD OF THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS EAST ASIA DIVISION WHICH HANDLES CHINA AFFAIRS EXPLAINED TO THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR MAY 7 THAT THE GOI FELT IT HAD TO REPLY TO THE CHINESE STATEMENT BECAUSE PRC OFFICIALS AND DIPLOMATS WERE CIRCULATING AND ENERGETICALLY PROPAGANDIZING IT AT VARIOUS PLACES, INCLUDING AT THE UNITED NATIONS AND IN KATHMANDU. (PRESS REPORTS BASED ON AN MEA BRIEFING HERE SUGGEST THAT THE PRC STATEMENT WAS INITIALLY HANDED TO THE INDIAN CHARGE IN PEKING AS A PROTEST NOTE AND WAS ONLY ISSUED AS AN OFFICAL STATEMENT AND CIRCULATED AT HIS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT IT.) THE MEA OFFICIAL SAW THE PRC CONDEMNATION AS FURTHER CONFIRMATION THAT PEKING'S POLICY REMAINS ILL DISPOSED TOWARDS INDIA, AND THAT PROSPECTS FOR ANY IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS MUST AWAIT A CHANGE IN THIS POLICY, WHICH IN TURN MAY RELATE TO PEKINGS'S HOPE FOR ANOTHER GOVERNMENT IN NEW DELHI, HEADED BY THE CPM. THE OFFICIAL MADE CLEAR THAT THE COI WAS ALLUDING IN ITS STATEMENT TO THE PRC'S RECENT DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN PAKISTAN AS WELL AS ITS POSTURE TOWARDS BANGLADESH (THE OFFICIAL DID NOT ELABORATE ON BANGLADESH BUT WE ASSUME HE IS AWARE OF RENEWED SIGNS POINTING TO POSSIBLE EARLY ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN PRC AND BANGLADESH). THE MEA OFFICIAL (AS HAVE OTHERS WE HAVE SPOKEN WITH) DISMISSED THE PRC'S PING-PONG DIPLOMACY IN FEBRUARY AS ONLY A SUPERFICIAL AND TRANSITORY EXERCISE IN PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE DIPLOMACY WHICH LEFT UNCHANGED THE FUNDAMENTALLY ADVERSE DIRECTION OF PRC POLICY TOWARDS INDIA.

3. COMMENT: INTERESTINGLY, THE GOI DID NOT OFFER ANY
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OFFICIAL REJOINDER WHEN THE PRC MADE ITS FIRST OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON SIKKIM LAST SEPTEMBER 11. THE MEA OFFICIAL'S RATHER LAME JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS WAS THAT THE CURRENT PRC DOCUMENT IS BEING GIVEN WIDER AND MORE FORMAL DISSEMINATION THAN THE EARLIER. THE FACT THAT THE GOI CHOSE TO REPLY TO THE MOST RECENT ATTACK PROBABLY INDICATES AN INCREASE IN OFFICIAL CONCERN SINCE LAST FALL THAT PRC DIPLOMACY AIMED AT DISCREDITING INDIA IN THE EYES OF ITS

NEIGHBORS AND FURTHER AFIELD HAS BEEN MAKING HEADWAY IN RECENT MONTHS. OF COURSE, THE GOI'S INEPT HANDLING OF THE SIKKIM AFFAIRS FROM THE VERY BEGINNING HAS SERVED WHATEVER TROUBLE-MAKING INTERESTS THE PRC HAS HAD IN THIS MATTER. THE GOI MAY ALSO HAVE CONCLUDED THAT ITS OWN POSTURE TOWARDS THE PRC WAS BEGINNING TO LOOK EXCESSIVELY INERT, ESPECIALLY WHEN CONTRASTED WITH THE PRC'S ACTIVE PING-PONG DIPLOMACY IN FEBRUARY, AND THAT A SHARP REBUFF WAS CALLED FOR TO PRESERVE ITS OWN DIPLOMATIC AND DOMESTIC POLITICAL CREDIBILITY. WHILE THE GOI REJOINDER ONLY PUTS ON THE RECORD WHAT OFFICIALS HERE HAVE LONG BEEN SAYING ABOUT CHINESE POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA, ITS PUBLICATION SEEMS TO CONFIRM THAT NEW DELHI SEES NO PROSPECTS FOR ANY EARLY IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS SHORT OF A MAJOR SHIFT IN PEKING'S ATTITUDES. AS THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR WAS LEAVING HIS MAY 7 SESSION WITH THE INDIAN MEA OFFICIAL, THE CHINESE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES WAS ON HIS WAY IN, TO DELIVER WHAT WE UNDERSTAND IS A PROTEST AGAINST A DEMONSTRATION MOUNTED NEAR THE CHINESE EMBASSY MAY 4. THERE MAY BE SOME ROUGH POLEMICS AHEAD IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS AND THE GOI WILL NOT BE ANY HAPPIER ABOUT ESTABLISHMENT OF SINO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS, SHOULD THIS OCCUR. IS THE APPARENT CHINESE RELAXATION OF POLICY TOWARD DACCA THE OBLVERSE SIDE OF A HARDENING SHOWED TOWARD INDIA?

4. FRANKLY, WE DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CHINESE HAVE BEEN UP TO WITH INDIA IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS. MAYBE THEY FEEL REJECTED AFTER THE "PING-PONG" EXPERIMENT; OR MAYBE "PING-PONG" WAS ALL A CHINESE CHARADE, AS THE INDIANS CLAIM; MAYBE THEY REALLY ARE UPSET ABOUT SIKKIM; MAYBE THERE'S SOME DOMESTIC CHINESE FACTOR. BUT IT REALLY DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO US THAT HAVING MADE THE EFFORT IN FEBRUARY, INCLUDING CH'EN HSI-LIEN'S VISIT AND COMMENTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE SHIFTED BACK SO FAST TO A POLICY THEY MUST KNOW WILL DRIVE THE INDIANS UP THE WALL. NOT THAT THE INDIANS MADE IT EASIER WITH THEIR STUBBORN INSISTENCE ON HEARING THE CHINESE SAY "WE LOVE YOU" THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS ONLY. THE CHANGES IN SIKKIM WERE VIRTUALLY INEVITABLE AND CLEARLY FORESEEABLE LAST YEAR, AT WHICH TIME THE CHINESE MADE THEIR PROTEST. COULD THE CHINESE REALLY NOT HAVE THOUGHT THE INDIANS WOULD MOVE AHEAD AGAIN IN SIKKIM? WE CERTAINLY DON'T BUY THE INDIAN OFFICIAL LINE THAT THE CHINESE INTEND TO WAIT OUT THE OVERTHROW OF THE CONGRESS GOVT IN NEW DELHI AND THE SUCCESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (MARXIST). NOT EVEN CHINESE ARE THA PATIENT*

5. WE AWAIT FURTHER ENLIGHTENMENT FROM CONGEN HONG KONG

AS WELL AS THE VIEWS OF EMBASSY DACCA.
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